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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8990
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3586
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9799
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4202
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0078
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2081
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7260
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0750
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3805
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0178
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0090
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0136
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000006

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KARIMOV BEGINS TO RESHUFFLE CABINET IN
UZBEKISTAN

Classified By: Poloff Steven Prohaska for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: Official press reporting indicates that President Karimov has appointed Rustam Azimov as First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Ravshan Mukhitdinov as Minister of Justice. Unofficial reporting suggests that Karimov also has appointed a new Minister for Higher Education and new Chief of the Information-Analytical Department of the Cabinet of Ministers. The timing of this partial Cabinet reshuffle is unusual given that the government has not even announced the date of the presidential inauguration, and it breaks with Karimov's previous tradition of submitting a list with an entirely new Cabinet composition to the Oliy Majlis for approval. Further appointments and dismissals are possible in the near future. End summary.

[¶2.](#) (C) Official press reporting indicates that as of January 3, President Karimov has appointed at least two new senior officials: Rustam Azimov as First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance - Chief of the Economic Section and Foreign Economic Relations, according to "Narodnoye Slovo" and "Pravda Vostoka," and Ravshan Abdulatifovich Mukhitdinov as Minister of Justice, according to "Huquq." Unofficial reporting from the independent website [uzmetronom.com](#) suggests that Karimov has appointed other officials including Azimjon Parpiev as Minister for Higher Education (the previous Minister, Rustam Kasimov, has remained Deputy Prime Minister) and S. Bekenov as Chief of the Information-Analytical Department of the Cabinet of Ministers.

Comment:

[¶3.](#) (C) Official confirmation of new appointments to the Cabinet now is highly unusual, given that the Central Election Commission has not yet released the final vote count for the presidential election and the date of the presidential inauguration has not yet been set. Embassy contacts, including the Acting Head of MFA's Americas

Department Mamajanov in a January 3 conversation with Ambassador, have told us that no reshuffle would take place until sometime after President Karimov is sworn in for his new term. The announcement of new appointments now also breaks with Karimov's previous tradition of submitting a list on the composition of an entirely new Cabinet to the Oliy Majlis after his previous elections. It is unclear why Karimov has made this change, but his moves will be watched carefully as many in the elite here expect the beginnings of a transition/succession scenario to take shape during this term. It is possible that further reshuffling will take place in the weeks to come, and we can probably expect dismissals and reappointments of hokims (mayors or governors) soon.

14. (C) Azimov's star is rising. Being appointed first among deputy ministers will only fuel additional speculation that Azimov may eventually succeed Karimov.
NORLAND